

Washington State Homeland Security Section

Information Bulletin

HLS-IB-2008-012

Subject: Reimbursable Travel Rates for Federal Grant Programs

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Approved:


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I. Introduction

The Homeland Security Section of Washington State Emergency Management is providing this information bulletin to assist local governments, state agencies and tribes in understanding federal and state requirements regarding what meals and lodging travel rates can be charged to the federal grant programs which it administers.

II. When traveling on business, paid for by federal grant programs, what per diem for meals and lodging should be used?

Federal regulations and Washington State law both place a limit on lodging and meals costs that can be reimbursed by the state and charged to federal grant programs. No lodging or meal costs reimbursed through the grants may exceed federal maximum allowable rates. These federal maximums are established by the General Services Administration and are updated regularly. The rates can be accessed at www.gsa.gov, and are organized by state and city. The State's Office of Financial Management reviews these rates as they are updated and publishes Washington State's rates in the form of a state map with the lodging and meal rates for each county. As new maps are published they are also posted on the EMD website.

All contracts executed through the Homeland Security Section include language stating that no travel reimbursed with federal grant funds can exceed federal maximum rates. This requirement includes both travel within the state and travel outside the state. These rates are not intended to circumvent local travel policies. All local policies regarding pre-authorization and approval, local rate schedules, and post-trip review and approval must be followed. The federal rate schedule only sets the maximums that can be charged to the grant program, it does not supersede local policy. As with all federal, state and local rules and regulations, when faced with a contradiction between two policies, follow the policy that is more restrictive.

All international travel charged to federal grant programs must be pre-approved by the federal grantor prior to the travel occurring. Justification for international travel must include a detailed explanation of the purpose and objective of the trip, as well as a detailed cost breakdown.

Whatever documentation is required by local, state, or tribal policy must be kept on file and made available upon request by either an auditor or the state while performing monitoring activities.

III. What if local or union negotiated rates are higher than the federal maximums?

There will be times when the federal maximums are lower than either locally established travel rates or union negotiated travel rates. In these circumstances the jurisdiction may be required to reimburse the employee at the agreed upon (higher) local rate. The local jurisdiction can honor that higher rate and reimburse the employee at that rate, but any amount in excess of the federal maximum cannot be reimbursed by the grant. Any costs reimbursed to the employee over the federal rate would have to be absorbed by the jurisdiction.

IV. References

Code of Federal Regulations Section 44, 13.20 & 13.22 <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/retrieve.html>

Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 43.03.050 and 43.03.060 <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/>

EMD Website <http://www.emd.wa.gov/>

Financial Management Guide www.fema.gov

Code of Federal Regulations Section 2 CFR 225 or OMB Circular A-87 <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/>